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STYLE.

WHEN, in ordinary conversation, we hear an artist spoken of as working in the Munich style, we understand it to mean that he adopts the manner of the Munich school. When we say "he has a style of his own," we mean that he sees things from a new point of view, or that he has an original way of using his materials. When we say that a coat or a dress is "stylish," we mean either that it follows the prevailing fashion, or that its maker impressed on it some grace or elegance of his own. We also speak of the work of a painter or sculptor, poet or singer, as being in the "Grand Style," and the simple word style is sometimes used as if it meant the same thing as the Grand Style.

Let us try to find out what the word "Style" really means. Every one has heard the phrase, "*Le style c'est l'homme*," which must be translated without changing its significance. It means that a man's style is that by which he will be remembered. "Facts and inventions," says Buffon, "can be appropriated and made use of by others, but style is the man himself." But we must keep in mind the distinction between the manner of a school and the work of an individual artist. Thus, at all times there have been groups of artists who have co-operated in a common circle of ideas, around a leading head, each one supplying some individuality of his own, but all working toward a common perfection. Thus, we have the Venetian, the Florentine, or the Antwerp school, each of which names immediately suggest a certain manner of striving after the expression of certain thoughts; but behind that we find in each, several great artists, each with a distinct style of his own; that is, a distinct individuality. In this sense style is the part of the man by which he is known to the world, as is his physiognomy; it is not his thought, which is his own and incommunicable without a language, nor is it his manner, which he may share with many of his school; but it is the mode of the expression of his thought. Now a man's style may be very bad, but if it really is a style it must be interesting, because expressive of the man's individuality. "The presence of this quality sometimes makes ruggedness pleasing, and the absence of it always leaves symmetry insipid." *

If genius be, as Schopenhauer declares, pure preception unencumbered by any sense of individuality, so that all things are seen alike without prejudice, then his style is the mode by which this genius makes known his thoughts about what he sees to us. If he be a writer, he needs to use a written language, and the way in which he expresses what he sees is his style. If he be a painter, he needs, shapes, colors, lights and shadows. These may be employed in the manner of one school or of another, but if he have anything to say he will have a style of his own.

And now what do we mean by the Grand Style? This is what Reynolds says of it: "All objects exhibited to our view by nature, will be found upon close examination to have blemishes and defects. The most beautiful forms

have about them something like weakness, minuteness or imperfection. But it is not every eye that perceives these blemishes. It must be an eye long used to the contemplation and comparison of these forms; and which, by a long habit of observing what any set of objects of the same kind have in common, has acquired the power of discerning what each wants in particular. This long laborious comparison should be the first study of the painter who aims at the grand style. By this means he acquires a just idea of beautiful forms; he corrects Nature by herself, her imperfect state by her more perfect. His eye being enabled to distinguish the accidental deficiencies, excrescences and deformities, he makes out an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any one original. This idea of the perfect state of nature, which the artist calls the ideal, is the great leading principle by which works of genius, are conducted. By this Phidias acquired his fame, etc." In like manner Flaxman, under the head of Style, and the Ideal Style, after describing the Olympic games, "which engaged all the noble youth of Greece in honorable contest, while the genial sunshine and mild breezes rendered little clothing or none at all necessary, naturally led to the contemplation of the human form, and comparison of beauty in the parts, between one subject and another. * * * The choice of the most perfect forms—countenances expressive of the most elevated disposition of mind and innocence of character—the limbs and bodies, examples of manly grace and strength, or female delicacy, youth and beauty, in all their variety and combinations in perfection. Indeed, we must believe, when we look on those forms, so purified from grossness and imperfection, that could we see angels and divine natures they would resemble them." Grimm, in his life of Goethe, which we quote from memory, says that the "Greeks invented Style, which is the rendering of the essential facts—those which are of universal application—and discarding the accidental."

If our former definition of Style be correct, it would seem to be more proper to speak of the ideal manner or grand manner. The word Style is undoubtedly derived from a writing instrument; it certainly means that by which the individual may be recognized. Phidias may be recognized in his work, and so may Praxiteles, but both work in the grand manner, in the grandest of all manners, which probably will never again be approached. We close this rambling paper with one more quotation, this time from Lord Lytton: "Lady Blessington, who passed her life in appreciative intercourse with eminent writers, observes that, to set an author's style above his thoughts is like praising a woman's dress more than her beauty; style being, like dress, a secondary matter, which should not divert attention from what it is only meant to adorn." But to this observation of Lady Blessington, another more gifted authoress objects. "For attention," writes Delphine Gay, in a letter from Paris, "is not diverted from the beauty of a work by that which enhances its beauty." And in support of her word she describes a conversation with Victor Hugo on the subject of Style. The poet had taken from her table an ornamented pin surmounted by a jewel, which he con-

* Lord Lytton, who is elsewhere quoted.

tinued to examine while they were talking. The jewel represented a fly, set in gold, and, "here," he said, "you see what Style is. In itself this fly is but an insect, in its setting it is a jewel." Fascinated by the sparkle of this simile she exclaims: "How true! and surely it cannot be wrong to replace an insect by a diamond." "Facts and inventions," says Buffon, "can be appropriated and used by others, but Style is the man himself."

—GEO. C. LAMB DIN.

THE ART TARIFF.

FOR a short time there was a slight excitement in the artistic world, consequent upon the appearance of the circular letter and petition from the Art Committee of the Union League Club, advocating the removal of all duties on importations of foreign Works of Art. (It is a noteworthy fact, that these documents emanated from a club of protectionists, and from an Art Committee upon which there was not a single artist.) These were met by a counter circular and petition from a committee of artists, favoring the substitution of a moderate specific duty that would be only a nominal tax upon valuable Works of Art imported, in lieu of the present *ad valorem* duty of 30 per cent.

The circular from the Artists' Committee, which we give below with their petition, contains the petition of the Union League Club Committee, who have since met the Artists' Committee in the most friendly manner, and are quite willing to co-operate with them in obtaining a change from the present duty to a moderate specific one, as that is the nearest approach to their ideas that seems to promise any success. The artists generally favor a duty of fifty dollars on every Oil Painting, although some of them place it at one hundred dollars. It is not probable that anything can be effected in Congress during the present year.

CIRCULAR.

DEAR SIR:

New York, Dec. 19th, 1884.

A petition to Congress, purporting to emanate from the artists of the country, has been circulated for their signatures by the Art Committee of the Union League Club; but the document has so little of the ring of the prevailing thought of the artists, and its preamble contains so many misrepresentations, that it is not probable that any of them were consulted in its preparation.

Section I. of this preamble states, that "high duties on the importation of Works of Art can be justified only on the ground that such objects are manufactures and need protection."

High duties being only a relative expression, the present duty of 30 per cent. on imported Works of Art cannot be considered as *high*, when the duties on all other importations average at least 50 per cent. And the duties can be justified on the ground that such objects are manufactures in the broadest sense, and are entitled to the same protection, and no more, that is given to other products of home industry.

Section II. states that: "Painting, Sculpture, and the kindred arts, are means of Education and Civilization; they are neither luxuries nor manufactures in any commercial sense."

Then Literature and Science, being more obvious means of education and civilization than Painting, Sculpture and the kindred arts, it follows that books and scientific apparatus should precede art on the free list. Painting and sculpture are in every country considered as luxuries, to be indulged in only after the necessities of life have been provided; they have no place in the curricula of the majority of our educational institutions, and in the others, only a cursory knowledge of art is attempted. Special art schools for the training of those who intend to become professional artists being, of course, excepted.

A Work of Art is treated by the artist, by the art dealer and by its purchaser, exactly as they treat any other article of manufacture, and the Government should not be blamed for adopting the same views in the adjustment of the Tariff.

Section III. states: "That with an overflowing Treasury, protection is needless and harmful, when it is not demanded by the class which the Government assumes to protect."

An overflowing treasury may be an argument for a general reduction of duties; but not for a removal of them from any special class of articles to the special injury of its home producers, who are entitled to the same rights as are any other citizens.

Many years ago the artists petitioned Congress for a specific duty that would protect the country from the meretricious art work with which it was being deluged; but their petition was not granted, and the artists were so misrepresented and abused by the Press that they were discouraged from making any further attempts.

Section IV. states: "That Works of Art are not the product of day's-labor, but of brain; legislation may encourage artists, but tariffs cannot create them."

It may flatter the vanities of a few callow artists to be told that they are all brain, and are a race of beings apart from other men. If the mere thought of a Work of Art were the completed work, then such might be regarded as the product of the brain alone; but, as a matter of fact, it is only in the realization of the thought that it becomes a Work of Art; and this is consummated only by day's-labor of brain-directed hand and body, which must be fed, housed, clothed and furnished with materials for work; to do which the artist must pay high protective duties on every item of his expenses. The second clause should rather read,—Tariffs may encourage artists, but legislation cannot create them.

Section V. states: "That the demand for Works of Art, unlike that for manufactured goods, has no natural limit; the greater the sale the greater will be the demand."

A few years ago there was a large demand for both American and Foreign art works, and the great falling off in this demand shows that a limit of some kind has been reached, whether natural or unnatural it matters not, and that the sale of Works of Art follows the same laws that govern the sale of all other products.

Sections VI. and VII. state truly enough: "That improvement in artistic taste promotes industry by increasing the skill and elevating the aims of our workmen, and by creating a demand for such improvements as add to the beauty and convenience of our homes, our dress, and everything